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STATEMENT OF
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TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS
AND CAPABILITIES
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
NATIONAL GUARD WEAPONS OF
MASS DESTRUCTION – CIVIL SUPPORT TEAMS

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Abstract

Chemical and biological defense has been an audit coverage emphasis area for us throughout the past decade, as the threats posed by these and other so-called asymmetrical weapons received increased recognition and the Department of Defense reacted with numerous research, acquisition and organizational initiatives. Before the WMD-CST audit, our reviews focused generally on the warfighters' preparedness to operate in contaminated environments on the battlefield. Presidential Decision Directive 39, issued in June 1995, and the Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996 directed various measures to enhance homeland defense against terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction. A DoD Tiger Team subsequently recommended establishing National Guard teams to assist the emergency first responders, such as local fire departments and hazardous material response units, in case of known or suspected WMD incidents. The focus of these teams, which were initially termed rapid assessment, identification and detection units, was to be on identifying what WMD material or agent was involved. The Tiger Team estimated that an initial complement of 10 teams could be operational by FY 2002. In January 1998, the Deputy Secretary of Defense tasked the Army to establish the Consequence Management Program Integration Office (COMPIO) to implement the Tiger Team recommendations. COMPIO adopted a very aggressive schedule, planning to field 10 teams by January 2000.

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Department of Defense effort to bolster this nation's homeland defense by fielding Weapons of Mass Destruction - Civil Support Teams (WMD-CSTs). My testimony will focus primarily on the results of my office's audit last year of WMD-CST program management, which are presented in our report of January 31, 2001.

Audit Background and Timing

Chemical and biological defense has been an audit coverage emphasis area for us throughout the past decade, as the threats posed by these and other so-called asymmetrical weapons received increased recognition and the Department of Defense reacted with numerous research, acquisition and organizational initiatives. Before the WMD-CST audit, our reviews focused generally on the warfighters' preparedness to operate in contaminated environments on the battlefield.

Presidential Decision Directive 39, issued in June 1995, and the Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996 directed various measures to enhance homeland defense against terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction. A DoD Tiger Team subsequently recommended establishing National Guard teams to assist the emergency first responders, such as local fire departments and hazardous material response units, in case of known or suspected WMD incidents. The focus of these teams, which were initially termed rapid assessment, identification and detection units, was to be on identifying what WMD material or agent was involved. The Tiger Team estimated that an initial complement of 10 teams could be operational by FY 2002. In January 1998, the Deputy Secretary of Defense tasked the Army to establish the Consequence Management Program Integration Office (COMPIO) to implement the Tiger Team recommendations. COMPIO adopted a very aggressive schedule, planning to field 10 teams by January 2000.

The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1999 mandated that:

A reserve component rapid assessment element team and any Reserve assigned to such a team, may not be used to respond to an emergency...unless... the team, or that Reserve, possesses the requisite skills, training and equipment to be proficient in all mission requirements.

In addition, the Act required that the proficiency of each team be certified by the Secretary of Defense. Congress did not specify a schedule for WMD-CST certification and fielding, but authorized an additional 17 teams in FY 2000 and 5 more in FY 2001, for a total of 32.

Recognizing the growing DoD and congressional interest in homeland defense, we decided in December 1999 to review the WMD-CST program. We briefed National Guard, Department of the Army and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials on the results of our review frequently during calendar year 2000. Most of the fieldwork was completed by September 2000.

Audit Results

It was apparent from the outset of the audit that the planned January 2000 initial operational capability date had been unrealistic; the WMD-CSTs were not operationally ready and the program lacked good management controls. On the other hand, we were highly impressed by the professionalism and dedication of the leaders and members of the initial 10 WMD-CSTs. The program's slippage and cost growth are in no way attributable to the 10 teams. Those problems stem from what we candidly characterized as ineffective management by COMPIO and inadequate oversight by the Department before the audit brought numerous issues to their attention last summer.

In its initial stages, the WMD-CST program is basically a system acquisition program requiring intensive upfront planning because it supports a new mission. Until recently, however, it was not managed within the Army acquisition program structure or by trained acquisition corps personnel. Instead, COMPIO operated as an essentially autonomous entity with no effective oversight to ensure that sound acquisition practices were followed. COMPIO regularly bypassed or inadequately coordinated with DoD and Army centers of expertise in acquisition, logistics, testing, doctrine, training, medicine, communications and chemical/biological defense. The result was flawed acquisition and sustainment planning. Our report discusses the many deficiencies evident during the audit in the WMD-CST program. For illustrative purposes, I will mention just a few examples.

First, doctrine for employing WMD-CSTs was incomplete and coordination between COMPIO and the Joint Forces Command and Army doctrine developers was very poor. Absence of approved doctrine obviously creates considerable risk of premature or

otherwise faulty decisions on training, equipment, manning and mission readiness certification.

Second, coordination with the Federal law enforcement community, a vital player in Consequence Management, needed improvement to ensure that WMD-CST mission definition and doctrine did not conflict with law enforcement agencies' plans and prerogatives.

Third, undue reliance was placed on external evaluations (EXEVALs), a unit level training event, to demonstrate the mission readiness of WMD-CSTs. What was actually needed was a rigorous program of operational test and evaluation. Not only do EXEVALs lack the discipline and reliability of formal testing, but every WMD-CST lacked key personnel, equipment, or both when the EXEVALs were staged. For example, none of the teams had received the Mobile Analytical Laboratory System (MALS) van, 9 of 10 teams lacked communications reachback capability, and all of them had personal protective equipment shortages. WMD-CST personnel identified numerous issues to us that normally would have been identified in realistic testing and resolved.

Fourth, training programs and materials were inadequate. Again, lack of approved doctrine and vague mission definition were factors.

Fifth, WMD-CST equipment chosen by COMPIO was generally different from standard items already in military inventories. We saw no compelling reason for COMPIO to buy nonstandard equipment that considerably complicates the logistics support requirements for WMD-CSTs, as well as posing testing and training issues.

Many of the problems identified by the audit could be considered symptoms of an immature acquisition program that was not ready for a full-scale production or deployment decision. Although the WMD-CST program was not managed or controlled using acquisition milestone criteria, the certification requirement in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1999 provided equivalent "check and balance." Of course, certifications are effective controls only when certification criteria are meaningful. We reported, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense agreed, that the certification criteria developed by the Army for WMD-CSTs were considerably less rigorous than Congress intended and simply not prudent from the standpoint of soldier safety and DoD credibility.

Department of Defense Corrective Action

The Office of the Secretary of Defense agreed with our findings and took action to implement our recommendations, which were:

- to disestablish COMPIO;
- to reassign WMD-CST program management responsibilities to the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Civil Support, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs) and the Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Defense Programs;
- to issue Office of the Secretary of Defense guidance prescribing certification standards and delineating the specific missions, duties and responsibilities of the WMD-CSTs;
- to ensure that WMD-CST certifications are based on that guidance;
- to coordinate at the Office of the Secretary of Defense level with the Federal Bureau of Investigation on WMD-CST roles and missions; and
- to conduct a thorough program review of the WMD-CST initiative, including operational concept, doctrine, equipment, sustainment, personnel assignments and rotations, funding and the certification process.

We have been gratified by the responsive actions taken over the past several months in response to the issues raised by the audit. I can report to you today that implementation of all of our recommendations is either complete or ongoing. My staff and I have been working closely with senior Office of the Secretary of Defense, Army and National Guard Bureau officials to move those agreed-upon actions forward. The increased involvement of the National Guard Bureau in this program is particularly welcome. In summary, I commend the Department for taking the audit findings seriously and undertaking the thorough review that we suggested to get this program back on track.

The full text of our Report No. D-2001-043, Management of National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Teams, January 31, 2001, is available on the web at www.dodig.osd.mil. Again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important hearing. This concludes my statement.